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DO ARMAMENTS PROVOKE WAR?

Are large armaments as such either provocative of war or deterrents of arbitral and judicial settlement of international difference?

Negative,* By REAR ADMIRAL AUSTIN M. KNIGHT, U. S. N.

I AM TO discuss the question whether large armaments are or are not provocative of war.

I contend that they are distinctly not provocative of war, if considered in themselves and without reference to the spirit of the nations maintaining them. I contend, further, that in many, perhaps in most, cases, they are distinct deterrents from war, and this especially when they belong to nations like our own, whose spirit is essentially unaggressive and unmilitary, for in the consideration of this matter we must recognize two types of nations—one aggressive, the other non-aggressive. I shall have more to say about this before I have finished.

In a large proportion of the wars of which we know the causes—if we except civil wars and wars of religion—we find these two types opposed, the aggressive nation forcing war, in one way or another, upon the one which is non-aggressive. This may not be by a direct invasion of territory. It may be by an invasion of rights or a violation of ideals quite as compelling in effect as would be a violation of territory. As between two nations representing these contrasted types, if disputes arise, the only way for the nation which is peacefully inclined to insure consideration for its rights is to be ready to defend these rights. The surest way to maintain peace is to make it manifest to the nation which thinks to profit by war that there is no hope of profit in it.

Aggressive power, faced by power held in reserve, quietly, unobtrusively, unthreateningly, but resolutely, will hesitate long to take the step from which there can be no retreat.

I do not claim that in any case or with any nation armament is a certain guarantee against war. There is no such guarantee, and there can be none. But I claim that the effect of armament is, in the main, favorable to peace, and that the lack of armament tends, in the main, to invite war by offering to a world in which nations, even more than individuals, are subject to the temptations of selfishness and greed, the spectacle of great and alluring possessions lying undefended at the mercy of any nation which, at a given time, chances to combine the three characteristics of power, aggressiveness, and covetousness.

No one can say how many times nations have been saved from attack by being ready for defense. It is never easy to prove what might have happened if conditions had been different from what they were.

But history is filled with examples of nations being attacked because they were manifestly too feeble to resist.

I believe that there are few, if any, cases in history where preparedness can be shown to have been in any

sense, except that to which I have just alluded, a real cause of war.

The ambition of Bonaparte did not grow out of his preparedness for war. His preparedness grew out of his ambition. He prepared to fight because he was determined to fight.

Germany and France did not go to war in 1870 because of their armaments. They went to war because each had, or thought it had, something to gain by war. Louis Napoleon needed to strengthen his hold upon the throne he occupied, and Bismarck wanted Alsace and Lorraine. And because they were determined to fight they prepared to fight.

It is a favorite contention of the pacifists that the war grew out of the armament of Germany. Nothing could be further from the truth. The armament of Germany grew out of the certainty that war was coming sooner or later.

The interests of Germany and England in industry and commerce have long been diametrically opposed. After centuries of practical control of the markets and the carrying trade of the world, England has, during the last quarter century, seen her control threatened by Germany—not by the army and navy of Germany, but by German manufacturers and steamship companies. It is the commercial, not the naval, fleet of Germany that England has feared. It is the commercial, not the naval, supremacy of England which Germany has challenged. Nor is this the only field in which the interests of the two nations have clashed and in which rivalries and jealousies and animosities have been developing.

The rapid increases in the population of Germany and in her industrial output have created need for room in which to expand, and, finding all other desirable regions of the world closed to her either by the actual occupancy of England and France or by the Monroe Doctrine, she has turned her eyes to the southeast, toward Asia Minor and Persia. But in that quarter she threatened the frontier of England in India and Egypt, and her Bagdad railroad, as a commercial enterprise, promises to become a by-pass to the Suez Canal. Here was a widespread and growing conflict of material interests out of which war was bound to come sooner or later, whether the nations concerned were prepared or not; and these are the real causes of the war, so far as Germany and England are concerned. Armament was the result of their quarrel, not the cause of it.

As regards Germany and France, it has been inevitable since 1870 that the struggle between these two should be renewed. The causes lie deep in the hearts and memories of the French people. It is unnecessary to state them here. They have existed for many years, and they would have continued to exist, and ultimately to result in war, whether the nations were armed or not.

* The affirmative side of this discussion, presented by Dr. Charles E. Jefferson, appeared in the ADVOCATE OF PEACE for July.

The racial animosities between Germany and Austria, on the one hand, and Russia on the other, connected largely with Poland and Serbia, have existed for centuries, and have no connection with preparedness for war except as making preparedness necessary because they rendered war inevitable.

The age-long desire of Russia for an outlet to the sea through the Dardanelles, with the ownership of Constantinople, which alone could make that outlet secure, is another of the causes of the war, and is, like most of the other sources of friction which have been mentioned, commercial in origin and manifestation.

To sum up, the real causes of the present war are not in any primary sense military. They are primarily and almost exclusively industrial, commercial, and racial. Preparation for war has grown out of the danger of war, not the reverse.

But those of us who wish to see the United States powerful think of power not alone as a matter of offense and defense, not alone as a matter connected with wars, actual or threatened, but as a matter of influence and of helpfulness. We urge that the United States be made great in physical power in order that its moral power may be made effective beyond its borders; that its ideals of freedom and justice and righteousness may be felt in the councils of the world. And we deny that the possession of power is in itself an incentive to use that power for evil. Here, I believe, we touch the very core of the whole controversy between those who wish to see our country strong and those who seek to keep it helpless.

On one side are arrayed those who believe that our people are instinctively just, and even generous; that, given power, they would use it, on the whole, sanely and magnanimously for advancing the interests of civilization and humanity. On the other side are arrayed those who lack this confidence; who feel that our people cannot be trusted not to play the bully. On this side, too, are those who see in peace the first of blessings and in war the worst of evils; who would have our country sit idly by, powerless to interfere and disinclined to interfere, no matter what wrongs may be committed at our doors, and who, going further, would have no resistance made against wrongs aimed at our national honor, our national safety, or even our national life.

For myself, I stand with the first. I believe that power in the nation, as in the individual, is the necessary basis of usefulness.

The United States has been a great nation for a hundred years. But never until the ending of the war with Spain, in 1898, did it take its place as a world power. There are doubtless those who think that it was better off in its earlier position of "splendid isolation," but such a view is narrow and selfish. So long as it was isolated it was powerless to contribute anything worth while to the progress of the world. Conditions changed suddenly and completely with the victories of our army at Manila and Santiago, and in one short summer the country passed from a provincial power to a world power. Recognition of our right to play a part in world affairs came without demand from us. Within a very few years it fell to our lot to make two important contributions to the peace of the world in connection with matters from which before the war we would have been contemptuously ruled out if we had

attempted to interfere. I refer, of course, to the Treaty of Portsmouth between Russia and Japan and to the settlement of the Moroccan question at Algeciras. The first of these is too well known to need description here. It was epoch-making not only in the history of the United States, but in that of the world. Ten years earlier the nations involved and the world in general would have smiled at the thought that a President of the United States could interpose with any effect in such a war as was then at its height. Yet at the time it was accepted in all quarters as entirely natural that he should be the one to take the lead in a movement for peace.

The United States had little interest in the Moroccan question which became acute in 1905. Yet when an international conference assembled at Algeciras to consider the question, our representative was welcomed, and it was very largely through the part which he played that an agreement was reached which preserved the peace of Europe. A report of the conference reads:

"What also seems certain, and what is particularly gratifying, is that Ambassador White has taken a leading part in bringing about the happy result. From the first this country has been looked to for the exercise of conciliatory influences, and from time to time there have been reports that it was smoothing the way to a settlement of all issues involved. Now it is explicitly stated that the disposition of the police question, the crucial question of the whole controversy, was suggested by the American Ambassador, and that its acceptance by the French and German governments was due to his tactful efforts."

The United States navy at this time was far from being a great navy, but it had established a claim to the admiration of the world, and had won for the country which it represented the respect of the world. And the power to help in making and maintaining world peace followed as a direct result.

Here, for the first time, the United States had *power* in the eyes of the world. And here was illustrated what power meant to us and how our Government and our people viewed the responsibilities connected with it.

A great peace conference lies ahead of the world in which the United States will desire to have a part. And beyond that lie other conferences which will make new rules of international law covering the developments of the recent past and attempting at least to provide saner methods for the future, with guarantees, if such can be secured, for the observance of these methods. Still other conferences, and more significant ones, will deal with a multitude of plans for securing permanent peace between nations.

Where is the United States to stand in all these gatherings? For peace, of course. But in the first rank of those who are studying this subject, or somewhere far back to the rear? It all depends upon the prestige with which our delegates enter the conferences.

If they go as the representatives of a great power, as the world counts great powers, they may have almost a controlling voice. If, on the question of disarmament, they speak as the representatives of a nation armed and ready to disarm if others will do the same, they will be heard. If they speak as the representatives of a nation already disarmed, and therefore helpless, their motives will be questioned and their arguments

discounted. Little importance will be attached to the fact that a nation, itself unarmed, urges its possible enemies to disarm.

It may be regrettable, but it is true, that other nations will judge us by the standards which they know to be applicable to themselves. Their delegates will be eminently practical men, as it is desirable that they should be; and the fundamental instincts of human nature will play a large part in the deliberations of the conference and in the conclusions reached. And no argument will count for much in favor of disarmament which comes from a nation which has everything to gain from world disarmament and nothing to lose.

We must be prepared to put something of magnanimity into our plea if we wish to make it effective; and to be magnanimous is the privilege of the strong.

There is much anxiety felt by pacifists lest the up-building of our army and navy should result in *militarism*. This anxiety appears to me to ignore entirely the spirit of our people. And yet the spirit of any people is the touchstone by which to test the question whether or not they may be safely trusted with powers which admit of being used unwisely. *Militarism*, as I see it, is a state of mind. And it is my conviction that this particular state of mind is so absolutely foreign to the people of the United States that there is no possibility of its being developed among them. From 1861 to 1865 the country passed through a period of intensive military experience during which our whole national life was turned into channels tending toward and determined by a condition of war. And at the end of the period the whole organization fell apart as if it had never been, and the country lapsed into a condition of abject helplessness, except that it had within its now entirely peaceful population some hundreds of thousands of men who, after having been dragged through the appalling blunders of four blundering years, with losses many times what the conditions justified, had been forced, almost in spite of themselves, into a degree of efficiency approximating that with which they should have entered upon the war. No one who reads the real facts of our wars of 1776, 1812, 1846, 1861, and 1898 is likely to be disturbed by the spectre of militarism so far as this country is concerned. All the Von Moltkes that Germany has produced, or ever will produce, could not make America a military nation. The panic into which some of our friends are periodically thrown over the thought of schoolboys and their wooden guns is quite unnecessary.

Only one stage beyond that of the wooden gun is the military school for youths, and beyond this still we find the college whose curriculum includes military training. Has any reader found graduates of these schools more bloodthirsty or more quarrelsome than those from other schools and colleges, or, indeed, have they been able to distinguish them by anything except, perhaps, their better carriage, their more alert and forceful manner, their greater readiness to submit to discipline, their prompt obedience to authority, and their power in leading men? One could wish, indeed, that the military training which can be given might go even deeper than these superficial traits and instill something of what is finest in military *character*—for, strange as it may seem to some of you who hear me, military character rests upon three elements to which you cannot refuse your

admiration: loyalty, obedience, and devotion. In the army and navy we sum these up under the name of *service*, and so thoroughly do we identify the thought of this with our profession that we habitually speak of the army and navy as “the services.”

Please observe that the military character, as I have outlined it, has absolutely nothing in common with *militarism*, which, as I have said, is a state of mind, and a state of mind pervading a whole people.

In conclusion, let us consider for a moment what we mean after all when we speak of power and preparedness. Preparedness for what? To say preparedness for war is not to tell the whole story. There are wars and wars—good wars and bad wars; wars of offense and wars of defense. When I think of the United States as engaged in war, I think of a war in defense of some splendid cause, some lofty ideal, some issue involving freedom and justice and enlightenment. I see our country standing before the world as the champion of such things only as are fine and forward-looking in the progress and the uplift of the race. I think of any war in which she may engage as a war that is only a step to a righteous peace. If she is fighting to maintain her independence, I think of her as desiring that independence in order that she may be free to follow ideals which in their essence are altruistic, and I think of her as deserving victory because her victory will be the victory of civilization. If I am right in my conception of our country, how far-reaching the disaster if she is found unequal to the task imposed upon her because she lacks the *power* to meet her privileges and her responsibilities!

Some one has said that the advocates of preparedness lack the larger vision of the pacifists. I deny that this is so. I claim that ours is the larger vision, because it takes in, not alone a land at peace, but a land at peace with all its ideals preserved, its people protected, its possibilities of helpfulness expanded and expanding—a land not stripped of power through cowardly fear of using power unjustly, but rich in power, and richer still in the determination that this power shall be used alone as a means to the attainment of great and noble ends.

THE HEROISMS OF PEACE

By JOHN WRIGHT BUCKHAM

NO ONE who has read the article by President Tucker in the *Atlantic Monthly* for April, “The Crux of the Peace Problem,” can doubt that he has put his unerring finger upon the fundamental weakness of the peace movement. The morally sound man does not want a peace of inertia. He suspects “the ghastly smooth life, dead at heart.” The peace of the human mollusk is to him nauseating. He knows that life is not worth living, either for individuals or nations, unless it has in it conquest, sacrifice, achievement, and these have for ages been associated with war. If he can be shown that this association is merely adventitious; that the extermination of war is not an end, but a means; that it is essential that war be abolished in order to open the way for larger conquests and to release forces that have been held back by its domination, he will be ready to meet the peace movement with a more whole-hearted response and commitment.

It is not an easy matter to reverse the misconception